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VINDICATION

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The CLERGY

O F T H E

CHURCH of IRELAND

By the *EXAMINER.* A

WHEN the News first came over, that a Gentleman was Turn'd out of the *Privy-Council* in *Ireland*, for Reflecting, in a very prophane Manner, upon the *Clergy* of that Kingdom, in *Convocation* assembled; some of the sanguine Well wishers to the *CHURCH*, were pleas'd to say in the usual Stile, That it was to the great Mortification of the *Whigs*: Whilst the Under-clamourers of the *Faction* seem'd to be very much surpriz'd, and express'd themselves in some of these ambiguous Terms --- *You see what they are driving at..... No body knows where This may end.*--- Which are the usual Language of the Hackney Advocates and Drudges to Sedition, before their Leaders and Prompters have given them their Lesson, how to *Open*, and be more particular in their Clamours. It might indeed be reasonably expected, That upon the Arrival of this Piece of News, the *Whigs* shoud stand and gaze a while, and assume a few Airs of Astonishment: Because, the Punishing of any One, for speaking Lightly and Profanely of Religion, or for affronting the *Orthodox Clergy*, shews a Spirit in the Ministry so widely different from that which possess'd their Patriots, when the very same Crime was accounted highly Meritorious, and made a Recommendation to Favour and Preferment; that a good deal of Wonder may very well become them, at the Odness of the Turn; notwithstanding they are prepar'd to guess at the Reasons of it.

Upon this Occasion I cannot forbear congratulating the *Church of England*, how little soever this remote Circumstance may seem to affect Her. It is a Happiness (which Sister *Churches* did heretofore often Mention with Joy in their mutual Intercourses with each other) that She had so near a Neighbour, united to Her in the same Common Head, both Earthly and Heavenly, and Reform'd by the same pure Patron of Primitive *Christianity*, who, after a long and unwearied Struggle with the Tyranny of *Popery*, and Encroachments of *Fanaticism*, can still put Her in Mind of the Rights and Dignity of a *Protestant Episcopal Synod*.

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Synod; and whenever *She* is attack'd by prophane Irreligious Men, can procure Justice upon the Offenders, and maintain the Honour of Her Orders and Her Clergy. The *Irish Church* enjoys this further Advantage, That Her most inveterate and formidable Enemies are *those without*; and that the Attempts against Her are general, and reach to the *whole Order*: Because there are few of Her Clergy, who are at the Pains to deserve the Thanks and Praises of *Hereticks* and *Schismatics*, or woud value themselves for being chiefly in their Favour. The Promotion of the present Learned Pious and Wise *Primate of Ireland* to that Dignity, which by a Course of many Great and Eminent Services he has so well deserv'd, gave a Lustre to the *Church* which sensibly affected all Her best Friends in *Both Islands*. A Time may come, when perhaps I shall be able to Compliment my Neighbours upon some further Advantages, which, with the Favour of the Government, the *Irish Clergy* may reasonably expect; whereby they shall be enabled to stop the Growth of *Popery*, and root out the Seeds of *Fanaticism* and *Rebellion*: When some Attonement shall be made for that heavy Burden and indelible Blemish on the *Irish Establishment*; where a Numerous Body of *Dissenting Teachers*, many of whom are found to be *Dissenters* from the Government as well as from the *Church*, were maintain'd at the publick Expence, and to shew us how Learnedly they can explain the Meaning of *Toleration*, were paid for opposing the National *Church*, more heartily than they did *Popery*; and were encourag'd to Propagate *Schism* and *Rebellion*, and entail our Corruptions upon Posterity.

But waving these more general Considerations, I shall confine the rest of this Paper to the particular Occasion of Mr. M.,,th's removal from the *Privy-Council*. His affronting the Clergy in the Words of *Holy Scripture*, shews him to be a tolerable Master of the modish Rallery of the *Whigs* upon that Subject: But when we consider that they were originally spoken by the *Unbelieving Jews*, mov'd with Envy, who had taken unto them certain lewd Fellows of the baser Sort, and had rais'd a Mobb against St. Paul; the Parallel is not much to his Honour: And where the Performance rises no higher than to the Repetition of a stale forlorn Jest, I do not think the Consolation of having said One witty Thing after other People, will by any Means fall to his Share. The Honour of the *Priesthood* in all Ages and Nations, whether *Heathen*, or *Christian*, *Civiliz'd* or *Barbarous*, has ever been the Care of the Publick; and the Argument of *General Consent* turns very much in Favour of that Order. If the Dignity of their Character has been carried any where too high, and made a Grievance to the Subject, there is no Reason we shoud avoid this by running into a worse Extream. We are either very Ignorant or very Prejudic'd, if we do not know, that we have the best and most learn'd Clergy in the World; and whilst our Neighbours envy us upon this Account we shoud not treat them so as to make our selves unworthy of the Blessing. I know of no solid Reason for such Treatment, but a *Dutch Custom*, and yet our Circumstances and theirs, are, in the present Case, widely different. If our Clergy were too Rich, they woud not be so often insulted and Redicul'd for their Poverty: If they were Poor and Contemptible, they woud not be so Misrepresented, as they sometimes are as Dangerous and Formidable: If they did not excel in Learning, their Order had long since

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been Scribled out of *Britain*: And if they had too much Power, there would scarce be so many open Attacks upon the *Doctrines* and *Discipline* of the Church. 193
To Hate or revile the *Clergy*, out of pretended Zeal for the *State*, is senseless Malice and Ingratitude; because they always assisted us in Times of publick Danger, and have been often highly Instrumental in the Deliverance of their Country. To Hate them on Account of their Revenue, favours strongly of Oppression, and whether we consider their *Tenure* by the *Law*, or by the *Gospel*, we bid fair for the Overthrow of *Property*, by weakning the clearest and strongest Title that any *British Subject* can plead to his Possessions. To Hate them because they are of a different *Order* from us, and adhere to the Interest of their own Body, is a Proceedure that exposes our selves to a worse Censure; and very justly deprives them of that common good Sense and Sagacity, which all Bodies and Corporations, even to the lowest Order of *Mechanicks*, do exercise in a more ample Manner, than the most Sacred and Venerable, And to Hate them because many of them live in Ease and Retirement (so *Study* is called by Men of Business) must prove but an ill Requital for their generously foregoing those many Advantages, with Ambition and Avarice, join'd to their excellent Talents and expensive Education, might in all probability procure them. The *Orthodox Clergy* never aim'd at any of those extraordinary Powers and Priviledges, which many of the *Schismatical Teachers*, who accuse them of a *Tyrannical Temper*, have actually claim'd and enjoy'd, wherever they could work themselves into an Establishment. Even the *Presbyterian Ministers* among us, for whose Sakes some Men pretend to lessen and oppose the *Clergy* out of a Tenderness of Spirit, do in Fact, exercise a more Substantial Dominion over their Congregations, many of which Congregations are full of *Independents*, and Men of a different Religion from the Preacher, than ever the *Clergy* aspir'd to in the Church, when their Interest was at the Height, and the Court lookt most favourably upon 'em. In a Reign preceding the late *Revolution*, when Immorality was too much in Fashion, the Custom of being Severe and Satyrical upon the *Clergy* obtain'd among the gay loose Part of our *Gentry* and *Quality*, even to a Forfeiture of that good Manners, which was then so much talk'd of as the distinguishing Mark of a Gentleman: But this Iniquity, however Gross and Inexcusable, falls very short of the modern Crime of Abusing, Libelling, and Buffooning the whole *Order*, not out of Wantonness of Wit, but Perverseness of Principles.

It is great Ignorance, or great Injustice, to form a Judgment of an entire Body, from the Conduct of a very Few, whose Misfortunes are perhaps more the Fault of those who Censure them, than their own. There is One Office among the *Clergy*, I mean that of *Chaplains*, which certainly wants to be better regulated. But by observing the *Pauvreties* which some unhappy Gentlemen are exposed to, we should rather labour to Reform, than Vilify; rather Cure the infected Part, than spread the Malady. All *Orders* of Men expect to have Justice done their Character, from the End and Design of their Institution, and from a general Account of their Conduct; and not from the ill Management of a Few, or the Introduction of one or two irregular Customs, which they could not foresee, and cannot yet prevent. We must therefore not treat the *Clergy*, as if they were only *Chaplains* to the *Laity*: And how light and indifferent soever this evil Habit of censuring

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cenfuring and reviling a Sacred Order may feem to us, upon the Recommendation of great Examples, and the Force of Custom; yet it is as manifefl a Breach of the *Divine Law*, and a fure Proof of great Lukewarmnefs, if not of utter difregard to Religion. Our Readinefs to accufe a weak *Clergyman* of Difgracing his own Gown, is a Proof, that we own it for Venerable; and therefore fhould not be the firft to Defile, what we were appointed to wear. There is, and ever will be, a clofe Connection between the Dignity of an Office, and the Reputation of thofe who bear it. Do we bid our Minifters look to the Honour of their Function, and at the fame Time vacate that very Advice we give them, by difhonouring that Function without their Concurrence? As he can never be call'd a good Subject, who reviles *Men in Authority*, and *ſpeaks Evil of Dignities*; fo neither can he be reputed a good *Chriftian*, who indulges himfelf in the open Practice of Clamour and Defamation, againft the *Minifters* of that Religion, and the *Stewards of its Myfteries*.

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But however flagrant this Iniquity really is in its own Nature, I appeal to the Experience of Mankind, whether reviling and male-treating the *Clergy*, has not been the infeperable Mark of a Party now among us. A *Whigg* has been known by his Satire and Ribaldry on this Subject, when he had escap'd fafe through all other Symbols of Diflinction. The *Titles, Habits, Looks, Geflures, Manner of Life and Education, Forms of Praying and Preaching, Dues, Revenues, innocent Diverfioni*, and all minute Circumftances in the Character of a *Clergyman*, have been made the ordinary Subject of Drollery and Contempt. The Prefs hath pour'd out its blackeft Stains upon the Order. They have been Ridicul'd in foolifh *Pamphlets*, idle *Songs*, and lewd *Mifcellanies*. In the *Senate* upon the *Bench*, at the *Bar*, and on the *Stage*, they have been fet up and expos'd as the Butts of Malice and Buffoonery; even to the Difgrace of the Perfons who fpoke, as much as of the Subject they went upon. The *Mitre* has been fet upon a Head, conftant to no other Principle, but that of Libelling and Abufing the *Inferior Clergy*; and the Pulpit fill'd with Reverend Declaimers againft the Honour of their own Order. But I ſpake the melancholly Reflection on paft Mifcarriages; in hopes, That the Advice of fome of their Sophifters will prevail with them, to be more Civil for the Future; if but merely out of Regard to their Temporal Intereft; and becaufe they find by Experience, the *Clergy* have it in their Power to make ample Reprizals. For indeed, wherever any of the *Faction* were tender of this Point, they always took care to let us know the true Motives of their Virtue, and made it rather a *Cafe of Good Manners*, than of *Conſcience*. God be thank'd, thofe Times of *Lingring Perſecution* are now over, when the *Clergy* were Oppreſſed, Ill-us'd and Difcountenanc'd; and then in the Way of gentle Reproof, and brotherly Advice, charg'd with Imprudence, for not Voting with their greateſt Enemies. The *Church* never expected to retrieve Her Loſſes; and recover Her former Happinefs, but in Company with the *Crown*, Her conſtant *Fellow-Sufferer*; and after ſo many Proofs of the Favour of the Government, the *Clergy* need not in any Cafe, diſpair of Juſtice. May every One, who has Ill-will to them, either timely prevent, or quickly meet the Fate of Mr. M....th. A more than ordinary Regard for their ſacred Function and Character will but juſt ſerve to make up the Duty of *Reſtitution*, and atone for paſt Injuries and Affronts.